TAMIL BLOOMS—BOOK 1.

1. NATURE IN THEVARAM

2. ANCIENT TAMIL SCRIPTURES

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The Treatment of Nature in the Sacred Songs of Sri Gnana Sambandha

" One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can".

PART I

Introduction. "The world", said Aristotle, "is a transcript of those ideas which are in the mind of the First Being". It is the golden Book of God spread before the eyes of man. It is in the main a work of two fair volumes, one, man himself and the other, his environment the world of Nature, the harmony of both reflecting the unity of Life. The ever-renewing eternal life of Nature has always exercised a profound and progressive influence on infant humanity which shaped its career on earth by careful adjustment in response. The birth and growth of Science has helped man to harness and press into service the huge and subtle forces of nature. Since the

awakening of the human imagination which Shelly calls the great instrument of moral good, the human soul has put forth its best energy to get at what is sweet and one with it in Nature through the channels of his senses. In its infancy, the human mind identified itself with Nature and gave forth songs of awe and admiration regarding her genial forces. In the course of its progress in history, it has in poetry mirrored its advance from the weakest sense of personal existence to the widest conception of the Individual against the world. Such poetry reflects the various stages in the evolution of national and world literatures. The process of the mind in piercing to the "central peace at the heart of the endless agitations" in Nature, is disinterested and remote from the physical impulse characteristic of the animal world, and it is the ideal rendering of the mental reality of things arrived at by such process, that bears the stamp of real Art.

Art is the combination of idealism and realism. If it were purely ideal, it could not appeal to the human understanding; if merely real there would be no poetry to enchant or elevate. This was the view of

poetic Art, entertained by Tamil critics of old as expounded by Nachinarkiniyar in his commentary on the Sutrams of the Tolkoppiyam. An extract from it is as follows:-

"இப்புலனெறி வழக்கினை, இல்லதினியது புலவ ரானாட்டப்பட்ட தென்னாமோ வெனின் இல்லதென்று கேட்டோர்க்கு மெய்ப்பாடுபிறந்து இன்பஞ் செய்யா தாகலானும், உடன்கூறிய உலகியல் வழக்கினை யொழித்தல் வேண்டுமா கலானும் அது பொருந்தாது. புனைந்துரை வகையாற் கூறுபவென்றலின், உலகத் தோர்க்கு நன்மை பயத்தற்கு, நல்லோர்க்குள்ளன வற்றை யொழிந்தோர் அறிந்தொழுகுதல் அறமெனக் கருதி நல்லோர்க்குள்ளனவற்றிற் சிறிது இல்லனவுங் கூறுதலன்றி யாண்டும் எஞ்ஞான்றும் இல்லன கூறா ரென்றற் கன்றே, நாடகமென்னாது வழக்கென்பா ராயிற்றென்பது".

"Should we not regard this literary tradition, a pure pleasant convention of scholars not at all borne out by reality? No. What is known tobe unreal will excite no feeling and create no pleasure. Further more, the custom of the community corresponding to the convention must also be non-existent which is not the fact. To satisfy the requirements of Art, there may be an idealization of what is real for

purposes of edification and not a representation of what is totally fictitous.

Art represents the highest of its kind when it shines not through the medium of any material substance, but of ideas which are the native products of the mind and of which words are but the symbols. When the proper workings of imaginative reason are recorded in that Art so as to kindle the co-operative consciousness of the hearers or readers, there is a high seriousness of absolute sincerity which Arnold regards as the test of supreme merit in it.

The unity of sound and sense in poetic Art is inseparable like that of life and soul in the human body. Hence the significance of Addison's supplement that " Words are the transcript of the ideas in the mind of man." The boundless and varried suggestiveness of good poetry is as profound as the abysmal depths of the poet's personality, as attested by the great poet Kambar.

" எற் பொருநாகர் தம் மிருக்கையீ தெனக்
கிற்பதோர் காட்சிய தெனினுங் கீழுறக்
க்ற்பகம னைய வக்கவிஞர் நாட்டிய
சொற் பொருளாமெனத் தோன்றல் சான்றது ".

This stanza describes the depth of a pool called 'Pampa' in the Ramayana. Even though the bottom of the lake appears to be the seat of the bright residents of Naga Loga it is really deeper than that, being comparable to the depth of meaning enshrined in the words of great poets of limitless bounty, resembling the divine tree of Kalpaka.

It is very rare to meet a myriad minded poet who can take in at a glance the web and woof of Nature and reflect in poetry her infinite charms, with a comprehensiveness, reaching beyond our ken. In Saint Thirugnana Sambandar, the foremost inspired leader of Saivaism, we have a universal bard poetising his impressions about Nature, as viewed in the beatific vision which was ever illumining his lofty soul.

Let us analyse the potent appeal to our heart and imagination of the lofty strains which broke forth from the boy-saint's roseate lips as he tripped from shrine to shrine throughout the length and breadth of the Tamil country. To the ordinary run of men there was nothing so exhilarating or transporting as sensous

imagery. The nature and measure of its appeal depend on the cast and shape of the recipient's intellect. Even a single description from the pen of an eminent poet has its own peculiar suggestiveness by "imaging the Infinite within limits it chooses to assume". Wordsworth said, "Each thing is infinte".

In some of the strains addressed to Nature, we my detect the prominence of appeal to the eye, which is sought for and valued most in rich poetry. One who has an eye for colour finds a good feast in lines like

"எண்ணார்முத்த மீன்றமரகதம் போற்காய்த்துக்
கண்ணார்கமுகு பவளம் பழக்கும்".

The areca palm of lively sight yields numerous clusters of pearls which turn in time into emerald shells that ripe and give birth to coral fruits. We have the quintessence of poetic jubilance where the punkah blossoms shower down the fried rice of their pollen into the holy homa fire of the red lotus, as if solemnizing the bridal of the conch-fish in the limpid pool below.

"தகவுடைநீர் மணித்தலத்துச் சங்குளவர்க்கந் திகழச்
சலசத்தீயுள்—மிகவுடைய புன்குமலர்ப் பொரியட்ட
மணஞ்செய்யு மிழலையாமே."

There is nothing in all his poems which the poet's alchemy does not turn into gold. Golden is the lotus, golden is its pollen, and golden is the swan enthroned in its centre. Golden are the creepers over the grass green-house of the willows, and golden is the sunshine dispelling the wood-glooms. What a striking contrast, of colours arrest our eye at every hour! The silvery drops from the sable clouds, the red plantain beside the dark kurunthu, the black beetle on the white lotus, the green areca dropping its crimson fruits and the golden bloom of punnai in its diamond case live ever in his poetry to yield us perennial charm with the bright pearl driving the dark night, the red-faced monkey climbing up the pitch-dark hillock, and the green parrot on the black palm shaded by the white clouds. How quaintly the dark bee is metamorphosed into the red flea as it dips itself and rolls in the mire of the pollen flooded by flowery nectar! Poignant are the similes illustrating the forms of things like the flower buds resembling the snake's thorn teeth, the long bunch of the plantain recalling the proboscis of the elephant, the tusk

bloom, the fish-eye and so forth. Who can fail to appreciate the exquisite tenderness and the pictorial effect endlessly beaming through such lines as,

"வாவிதொறும் வண்கமல முகங்காட்டச் செங்குமுதம் வாய்கள்காட்டக்—காவியிருங் கருங்குவளை கருநெய் தல் கண்காட்டுங் கழுமலமே" which mean Kazhumalam where the lotus looks like the fine face, the Kumudam, the red lips and the Kuvalai, the violet eyes of the ladies.

As Bradley says, there are certain things within the experience of a society which are potentially poetic. Such are many of the plants and animals of the tropical regions whose luxuriant and lofty growth, brilliant hues and imposing forms have rendered them permanently poetic. We have beautiful combinations of these which beggar all description in lines like:

"தேங்கொள் பூங்கமுகு தெங்கிளங்கொடி
மாச்சண்பகம் வண்பலா விலுப்பை—
வேங்கைபூ மகிழால் வெயிற்புகாவீழி
மிழலையானென வினைகெடுமே."

In several poems the poet brings out the beauty of situation and glory of landscape due to the peculiar ordering of fields, groves, tanks, and mansions in rural areas.

He often places the tanks, groves, and fields in successive concentric circles. He takes care to make the waters mirror the groves and the mansions in lines like:

> "வாய்த்த மாளிகை சூழ்தரு வண்புகார் மாடே
> பூத்தவாவிகள் சூழ்ந்து பொலிந்தசாய்க் காடே."

The contrast between country and town is hinted at in lines like:

> "நீருளார்கயல்வாவி சூழ்பொழி னீண்டமா வயலீண்டு
> மாமதிற்—றேறினர் மறுகில்விழா மல்குதிருக்களர்."

The calm lake reflects the foliage of shady groves on the fringe of the green fields sorrounding the high walls that encircle the car-streets alive with festive sounds. We enjoy the playful fascination of the rich scenes of rural life as where the cocoanuts from the head of tall palms fall tumbling in their course the areca-nuts which in turn beat down the ripe fruit of the plantain far and near into the blue waters below to frighten the stout valai fish (வாளைமீன்) into dashing against the lotus buds and tapping the honey within into the frog's mouth.

Turning to the songs which are remarkable for their appeal to the ear, the sound echoes the sense in,

"தண்ணிதாய வெள்ளருவி சலசல நுரைமணி ததும்ப
வெண்ணிறத்தருவிக டிண்ணெனவிழும்
தந்தத்திந்தத்தடமென்றருவித்திரள்பாய்ந்து."

We have the method of poetry illustrated best where the rill beats the bridal drum, where the cuckoo adapts its paeans to the notes of the flute and where the soft bee hums forth scientific tunes such as செவ்வழி. We have a store of poetic suggestion where the cuckoo's sweet music is enjoyed side by side with the endearing parrot notes of damsels and the soothing airs of the Veena in,

"வாசமலர்கோது குயில்வாசகமு மாதரவர் பூவை
மொழியும்
தேசவொலி வீணையொடு கீதமலிதே வூரதே."

and also where the sweet Tamil is rendered sweeter by the lisping speech of women striking a contrast to hard accents of foreigners in

"ஊறுபொருளின்ற மிழியற்கிளவிதேருமடமாத
ருடனார்,
வேறுதிசையாடவர்கள் கூறவிசைதேருமெழில்வேத
வனமே."

There is a soft homely pastoral scene where the bleating cattle speedily flock round the shepherd from spots out of sight, at his inviting flute beside the hill.

"கனைத்த மேதிகாணாதாயன்கைமேற் குழலூத
அனைத்துஞ் சென்றங்கணையுஞ் சோலையண்ணா
மலையாரே."

The eye and the ear get their due share of appeal where in the sandy woods of Venkadu, the thousand-эyed peacock dances to the tunes of the bee and the cuckoo, while the sea and the clouds supply the sonorous music of the tambourine.

"கண்மொய்த்த கருமஞ்ஞை நடமாடக்கடன்முழங்க
விண்மொய்த்த பொழில்வரிவண்டிசைமுரலும்
வெண்காடே."

We may here and there rest under the shades where the sweet juice of fruits and sweeter honey will ever be dripping on the tongue.

"குலைவாழைத் தீங்கனியும் மாங்கனியுந்
தேன்பிலிற்றுங் குறும்பலாவே"

the Kurumbala where the sweet fruits of the plantain and the mango pour down showers of honey.

"கொக்கினிய கொழும்வருக்கை கதலிகமு
குயர்தெங்கின் குவைகொள்சோலை
முக்கனியின் சாறொழுகிச் சேறுலரா
நீள்வயல் சூழ் முதுகுன்றமே."

Mudukundram famous for its dense grove of the cocoanut and long lawns where the juice of the plantain, the mango and the jack keep the ground permanently wet.

Our sense of smell is most pleasurably gratified not only by the refreshing flavour of the flowery nectar, but also by the all-pervading fragrance of sweet-scented plants and trees, as well as by the wholesome odours of the vakula, champaka, mallikai, kanthal, cherunthi and aloes of the sea-shore.

"கோடுமலிஞாழல் குரவேறு சுரபுன்னை
நாடுமலி வாசமது வீசிய நள்ளாறே."
"மரவத்தொடுமண மாதவிமவ்வலதுவிண்ட
குரவத்தொடு விரவும் பொழில்."
"எண்டிக்குங் கமழ்ந்திலங்கு சந்தனக்காடார்
பூவார் சீர்மேவும்."

As to the sense of touch, there is nothing so hale and bracing as the soft zephyr which, wafting all the spicy odours as it sweeps across the high hills, low dales, city groves and sea-strands, gently passes the sacred pool and lightly ruffles the ripples which lull to sleep the messenger of love seated on the golden throne of the lotus-bloom.

PART II

What Englishmen call the method of poetry has been hitherto illustrated in some measure. The essentials of Tamil poetic convention remain to be examined. Imaginative reason which is applauded as the underlying principle of modern poetry is the very life-breath of the Tamil ideas of "திணையொழுக்கம்," and "திணைமயக்கம்," the first maintaining that poetic substance must conform to the name of the spot where it rises and grows, while the second reflects the possibility of composite soil giving birth to varied products in promiscuity, and affords abundant scope for the exercise of a fertile imagination. The Tamil writers of old divided the surface of the earth into four zones according to the nature of the soil. The hill and its sorroundings were styled Kurinchi (குறிஞ்சி). The pasture and forest lands on the plain went by the name of Mullai (முல்லை). The town and its suburbs including the arable lands were termed Marutham (மருதம்). The sea and its shore were called Neithal (நெய்தல்). According to convention the peculiar products of each region

receive appropriate mention in poems relating to it.

In the holy hymns of our saint poet, the grove on the beach is rich and fragrant with punnai blooms, Indian saffron, and aloes of every kind, while the gems and shells which the waves sweep to the shore dispel the darkness of the spot. The flowers of kaithai and naithal peculiar to the place are described in a hundred stanzas. Extremely charming are the lyric touches hit off about the swan, the stork, the andril (அன்றில்) and the like native to the region.

There is a soul-stirring lyric addressed to andril as follows: "Oh andril that frequents the palm adorning the courtyard, have you not felt the woes of severance? Are you really hard-hearted? If not, please inform him, of the change of my complexion, who possesses braids of matted hair adorned by konrai blooms and resides at Thonipuram where the soft zephyr blows and sweeps." The beautiful references to the products and denizans of varied regions are likely to interest more the native student than the foreigner.

We shall now turn to strains wherein the appeal to emotions is prominent. Our

sense of wonder is stirred up when we read the references to intelligent parrots in groves which learn of their own accord and recite from memory the grand hymns of the vedas and the hard sutrams of sciences repeated by the literate.

"வட்டமதி தட்டுபொழிலுட்ட மதுவாய்மைவழு
வாத மொழியாற்
சட்டகலை யெட்டுமரு வெட்டுமவளர்த்தைத பயில்
சண்பை நகரே".

Similar is our appreciation of the beetle well-versed in all the varied tunes of scientific music

"பண்டான் கொண்டுவண்டு பாடும்"
"நேரிசை பாணில் யாழ்ப[illegible]லும்"

During our view of the sublime, emotion is intimately interwoven with our intellectual vision. It is not very correct to hold with Burke that the sublime in Nature bases its appeal on fear in contra-distinction to the beautiful, which yields us a direct sense of the harmony between it and ourselves; for, as Professor Bradley remarks, there are in the experience of what is called the Sublime, two stages, first a sense of being checked or menaced as though something were affecting us, which we could not grasp or stand up to,

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and the second, a powerful reaction of our feelings of union with it, that is, a 'rush of self expansion' amounting to rapture or adoration. What falls short of this, is the majestic.

In the lyrics of our Saint, we can find several instances of the majestic and the sublime. How majestic is the careless, slow-winged movement of the bee singing in extreme intoxication, figuring in the lines whose unity of poetic sound and sense is most expressive!

"வானளவு சூதமிள வாழைமகிழ் மாதவிபலா
நிலவிவார்
தேனமுதவுண்டு வரிவண்டு மருள்பாடிவருதே
வூரதே".

How triumphant is the enthusiastic ascent of the monkeys to catch at the clouds.

"கொண்டலார் வந்திடக் கோலவார் பொழில்களிற்
கூடி மந்தி
கண்டவார் கழைபிடித்தேறி மாமுகிலினைக்கதுவு
கொச்சை."

The majestic meets the tender in the lines:

மானபுகழ் வேதியர்களாகுதியின் மீதுபுகை போகி
யழகார்
வானமுறு சோலைமிசை மாசுபட மூசுமயிலாடு
துறையே."

There is a touch of exquisite grandeur where the branches of mango trees flung

aloft by mokeys plucking their delicious fruits, hit the clouds and eased them of their contents to the benefit of mankind. The majestic gradually shades into the sublime where the green gold parrots and golden blue peafowls soar above the heaven-kissing trees of the forest and adorn the path of the Eternal Sun. Majesty and beauty mingle in a most happy combination in the poet's description of gardens and groves. A mountain jungle, or a forest on the plain or a grove of the city or a tope on the sandy shore, whatever its name may be, is the genial home of Nature. It looks like an epitome of the Universe wherein all sorts and conditions of creation abound and enchant beyond resistance. With the golden touch of the divine poet's magical wand, the woods in all quarters rise up to the skies and overwhelm our eyes with the huge panorama of countless scenes fit for every kind and mood of sense and emotion. The soul-stirring melodies and harmonious symphonies of Nature's musicians keep us spell-bound; mountains echo to the rebound of the deer and the clouds resound the sweet shrill notes of the beauties; the rich and ineffable fragrance

of lovely blooms sanctifies our breath ; the gentle touch of the south wind cools and refreshes our brows ; and the ever-flowing rill of flowery nectar and fruit-juice extinguishes our thirst and hunger for good.

We are at the very height of sublimity during our gaze at the gigantic water fall portrayed in a line and a half :—

" மண்ணினை மூடிவான் முகடேறி மறிதிரைகடன்
முகந்தெடுப்ப—விண்ணளவோங்கி வந்திழியருவி."

The heaven-high falls descend on the plain sweeping the whole earth, dashing its sprays into the highest sky and leaping on to the billows of the sea. It is scarcely possible to discover in the whole range of devotional literature, the counter part of the full life of a river like the world-old Kauveri, idealised in scattered songs by our poet in his inimitable manner. Springing from the remote fountain-heads in giddy peaks, bubbling through the intercepting fogs, washing down the fabled pearls of the clouds, gathering tremendous force and momentum in her ceaseless leap from ledge to ledge, and striking terror into the heart of wild beasts, the mighty river thunders down the lofty rocks with her vast weight of sandalwood and bamboo,

tusks of elephants and plumages of peafowls, crystals and gems of rarest value, cassia and nard, cinnamon and cardamon. Casting up dazzling rainbows in circling wreaths over the foaming falls, the spacious receptacle of the incalculable wealth of the high hills traverses in her course all the wide woods, overflows the cherished maize-fields of the hunter-tribe, winds her way through the long lawns and reeds of the vales, and refined by the pathiri petals of the desert enters the region of Vishnu to receive as emblems of his grace the delicious fruits tumbling down the trees, mango, plantain and jack, and the delightful blossoms of the champaka and cherunthi, mallikai and mathavi, kondrai and kurunthu. Blessed by that God of protection, she marches on in triumph, smiling through the million fields of Marutham, overleaps the bounds of channels and lakes, in part mirroring and in part uprooting the aged trees on her sides. Then with her dower of all the riches of the "Five regions" she rushes forth whirling and eddying to meet her husband of Oeceanus. The cheery optimism of the poet casts a veil of self-satisfied and joyous

recklessness over almost the whole face of Nature.

A few instances will make it clear:—

"திருகல்வேய்கள் சிறிதேவலையச்சிறுமந்தி
முருகின்பணைமேலிருந்து நடஞ்செய்முதுகுன்றே",
"குன்றின்மலிதுன்று பொழிலினின்றுகுளிர்சந்தின் முறி
தின்று குலவிக்
கன்றினொடுசென்று பிடிநின்றுவிளையாடு காளத்தி
மலையே",
"மலைத்தலைவகுத்த முழைதோறு முழைவாளரிகள்
கேழல்களிறு
குலைத்தலைமடப்பிடிகள் கூடிவிளையாடி நிகழ்
கோகரணமே".

However as he is never one-sided, he gives us graphic pictures of the terror of elephants at the approach of the lion and the like.

"மத்தக்களிறுளிவ் வரவஞ்சிமலைதன்னைக்
குத்திப்பெருமுழைதன்னிடைவைகுங்கொடுங்குன்றம்"

Pathos naturally springs up when such tender animals such as the stag and the swan are put in fear.

"கானமான்வெருவுறக்கடுவிரலூகம் கடுவனொடுகளுமூர்
கற்கடுஞ்சாரல்",
"கருமைகொள்வடிவொடு சுனைவளர்குவளைக் கயலினம்
வயலிளவாளைகளிரிய
எருமைகள்படிதரவிளவனமாலும்".

A flash of humour lights up the scene pictured in the lines :—

விடமுண்டமிடற்றண்ணல்வெண்காட்டின்றண்புறவின்
மடல்விண்டமுடத்தாழை மலர்நிழலைக்குருகென்று
தடமண்டுதுறைக்கெண்டை தாமரையின்பூமறையக்
கடல்விண்டகதிர்முத்த நகைகாட்டுங்காட்சியதே".

"வலம்வந்தமடவார்கணடமாட முழவதிரமழை
யென்றஞ்சிச்
சிலமந்தியலமந்து மரமேறி முகில்பார்க்குந்
திருவையாறே".

Let us turn to a few scenes where love reigns supreme. The animal, most frequently mentioned in these holy poems, is the monkey.

"குரக்கினம்விரைப்பொழிலின் மீதுகனியுண்டு
பரக்குறுபுணர்ச் செய்விளையாடுபழவூரே".

The insect which receives constant attention is the bee.

"மாதர்வண்டுதன்காதல் வண்டாடியபுன்னைத்
தாதுகண்டுபொழிலின் மறைந்தூடுசாய்க்காடே".

That beast which is said proverbially to derive unparallelled pleasure from the realisation of love; and that bird which captivates the mind most in point of beauty are respectively the stag and the peacock.

"கலையினார்மடப்பிணை துணையொடுதுயிலக்
கானலம்பெடைபுல்கிக் கணமயிலாலும்
இலையினார்பைம்பொழில்".

The bird associated with utmost tenderness and typical intelligence is the swan, even which gets his sight dimmed by the tyrant of love, that we may enjoy the humour in the lines.

"ஏழைவெண்குருகயலே யிளம்பெடை தனதெனக்
கருதித்
தாழைவெண்மடற்புல்குந்தண்மறைக்காடுறைமைந்தா"

The most primitive stage of life is represented by the hunters of the hills.

"புனவர்புனமயிலனைய மாதரொடுமைந்தருமணம்
புணருநாள்
கனகமெனமலர்களணி வேங்கைகணிலாவு காளத்
திமலையே".

Turning to the subjective side of love, we find that the pathikam of Thiruchengattangudi, (திருச்செங்காட்டங்குடி) and that of Thonipuram (திருத்தோணிபுரம்) are full of lyrical addresses to birds and beings of a like nature capable of poetic appropriation.

It is enough for us to note the pathetic touch combined with genial sympathy in the following songs respectively addressed to the parrot and the cuckoo.

"சிறையாருமடக்கிளியே யிங்கேவாதேனொடுபான்
முறையாலேயுணத்தருவேன் மொய்பவளத்தொடு
தரளந்

துறையாருங்கடற்றோணி புரத்தீசன்றுளங்குமிளம்
பிறையாளன்றிரு நாமமெனக்கொருகாற்பேசாயே".

and in the address to the cuckoo

"பாறுறுமலர்ச்சூதப் பல்லவங்களவைகோதி
ஏனோர்க்குமினிதாக மொழியுமெழிலிளங்குயிலே
தேனரும்பொழில்புடை சூழ்திருத்தோணிபுரத்தமரர்
கோனுரையென்னிடைக்கே வரவொருகாற்கூறாயே"

and in " பொன்னம்பூங்கழிக் கானற்புணர்துணை
யோடுடன்வாழு
மன்னங்காளன்றில்காள கன்றும்போய்வருவீர்கள்.

... ...
... ... எனதல்லலுரையீரே ".

A peculiar feature of immense significance in Tamil poems is the employment of "உள்ளுறையுவமம்" which consists in giving suggestive metaphorical expression to ideas in terms of the fauna and flora of the five regions. This affords the widest scope for subtle comparisons and contrasts of the life of Nature with that of man.

The forms of Agaporul have assumed so much importance in the hands of saints and sages that they have found it convenient to symbolise through such media their own infinite spritual experience and aspirations.

A single instance may well suffice:

"சிந்தையிடையார் தலையின்மிசையார்செஞ்சொல்லார்
வந்துமாலைவைகும் போதென்மனத்துள்ளார்
மைந்தாமணாளவென்ன மகிழ்வாரவர்போலும்
பைந்தண்மாதவிசோலை சூழ்ந்தபாசூரே".

PART III

So far as we have advanced in our analysis of the various aspects of the treatment of Nature in these poems, we are led to see that Tamil poetry lacks few of the elements needed for its perfection. In spite of the fact that our poetry abounds in ideal pictures of artistic merits addressed to the imagination; although many of them are instinct with human interest; although the various passions which play a large part in the life of lower creation are delineated with fidelity to truth; and although our poems rise above the weakness of setting natural scenery as mere background of human pictures, these "picture poems" of ours are relentlessly subjected to the sweeping remark that they are not like the Western ones distinguished by "isolated feelings of individuals, their personal loves, their personal pleasures, and pains, brought into

constant contrast with Nature's life". This remark, (we may hope with reason) will be fully falsified by the fact of a few sections of Agaporul. The charge of conventionality is not to the point; for, as in every nation even the most individualistic of the poets find it needful to confine themselves to certain forms and modes of expression dictated by the native laws of poetry. So also do the poets of this land express themselves in conformity to the principle which underlies permanent poetic needs, and follow directions as to the manner of meeting such. Although literary conventions can never be abandoned by poets, they are at full liberty to weave innumerable dresses for their thoughts, as was the case with the recent original poet, Aranganatha Kaviraj by name, who unburdened his imagination in terms of four hundred ideas concerning one section of Agaporul. We need not hereby assume that the poet must ring the changes on one and the same harp nor should we stand by needless conventions of all sorts like 'யமகம்' 'திரிபு' etc, which are obstacles to true progress.

Next, it is very essential to caution those who are blessed with only one-sided development in these days against interpreting the sublime poetry of our poet, in the same light as the clear poetry of primeval ages, simply because animals are in certain respects identified with human feelings, and rushing to the conclusion that this was only due to the fact of his not having emerged from the twilight of subjective consciousness little discriminated from the objective. On the other hand, we can be reasonably convinced from what follows, that the saintly boy-poet was thoroughly actuated by boundless sympathy with the whole of creation that he idealised. There is in his poems nothing like the despair which breathes through those expressive of grave spiritual doubts. The bright optimism of our poet is the perennial optimism of one who has seen the Author of Nature face to face, and it can never be fully understood or imitated, as is his consequent moral sympathy which knows no end. We can scarcely notice any of his descriptions which is not born of sympathy, and does not bear signs of its birth. Being foreign to the

spiritual realm where he walks with the Almighty, as he himself indicates in the limes,

> "கழுமல முதுபதிக் கவுணிய னறியு
> மனைய தன்மை யனுதலி னின்னை
> நினையல்லவரில்லை நீணிலத்தே."

we are not in a position to discuss with any amount of clearness the meaning of his allegorical lyrics. Lastly we have to consider one question of extreme moment, namely the purpose of the divine poet in interpreting Nature. Has he anywhere given the key to open the door leading to the ultimate reality of all these descriptions? Let us for a while try to interpret our poet's aim in the light of Western ideals from the days of Attic literature.

Contrating our poet's songs with those of the west, there is neither the classical paganism developed from the nature-worship of primitive humanity nor the sad poetry of Greek and Alexandrian individualism which delights in comparing the ephemeral span of human existence with the eternal life of Nature. Never does our poet gild with any halo the 'local divinities' of the feudal age and sing 'of the greyhounds glancing through the

groves and 'bowmen bickering on the bent'. Nature is not viewed here from a prejudicial point of view like that of the narrow-minded clergy, as we could scarcely discover one jot of medieval contempt for Nature's grandeur. There is little of the grotesqueness in a way characteristic of the spacious and wonderful times of Queen Elizabeth. Nature is not looked upon as a beautiful machine whose exquisite mechanism is worthy of mere word-pictures. That we seem to catch glimpses of the golden age in his poetry is an illusion of Art, and we are nowhere told that the lamb and the lion drank from the same pool. Nor is here any description which mistakes lifeless symbols for the fresh inspiration of Nature.

Lastly we have to consider one question of vital importance, namely, the purpose of the poet's delineation of Nature. Beauties of Nature are manifestations of the mysterious agency of infinite Power. As a result of his personal realisation of the nature of God's contact with the Universe, the saint says:— The end he is, one at the beginning, two where sex is manifested, He the root of three Gunas, four unchanging

mysterious words, five elements, six tastes, seven fundamental tunes and eight quarters. In these he is identical, co-existent and different.

"ஈறாய் முதலொன்றாயிரு பெண்ணாண்குணமூன்றாய்
மாறாமறை நான்காய் வருபூதம் மவையைந்தா
யாறார்சுவையே ழோசையொடெட்டுத் திசைதானாய்,
வேறாயுடனானானிடம் வீழிம்மிழலையே."

That God energises the animate universe is indicated in the lines:

உரைச்சேருமெண்பத்து நான்குநூறாயிரமாம் யோனி
பேத
நிரைச்சேரப்படைத்தவற்றி னுயிர்க்குயிரா யங்கங்கே
நின்றான் கோயில்.

which mean "This is the temple of Him who is the life of lives for which are evolved in due course the eighty-four hundred thousand varieties of bodies spoken of in books. The above quotations lead us to the conclusion that in singing of Nature the Saintly boy-poet expounded the beauties and peculiarities of the natural shrines and temples of the Almighty, by way of exhorting us, not to sink in Nature and forget God, but to see and feel the presence and activity of Providence in her and advance towards the final goal of the direct mystic realisation of the Absolute.

Ancient Tamil Scriptures

BY K. SUBRAMANIAM, M. A., M. L.,

Recent historical research has brought to light that ancient Tamilians were a great and civilized race by themselves with a splendid literature and a magnificent religion of their own. Sanskritic influence of later times has served to conceal this fact so completely that many antiquated scholars of Tamil vie with students of Sanskrit in suppressing and denying it with all their sophistic skill and assiduity. Whatever their attempt may be, this idea has won due recognition at the hands of western scholars like Dr. Pope, Rev. Goudie etc. Dr. Pope calls the Saiva Siddhanta system, 'the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect', and Rev. Goudie regards Saivaism 'to be a religion of the Tamil people by the side of which every other form is of comparatively foreign origin.' Their opinions receive much corroboration from the references in ancient Tamil classics to a separate set of revelations held sacred by the Tamilians of yore other than the Vedas in Sanskrit. In the oldest of Tamil books extant it is

stated that the Tamilians classified their books into originals and derivatives. The first originals are said to have been revealed by Him who is the 'Supreme Intelligence ever free from the bonds of KARMA.' In the commentary to the verse[1] relating to the same a brief controversy strikes our attention. Questions are raised therein as to whether God verbally dictated those originals to sages or simply inspired them with the enlightenment requisite for composing them or provided some direct hints out of which they were evolved; and there are indications that the theory of inspiration or hinting was even in those days preferred to that of verbatim dictation. We have therefore reason to infer that ancient Tamilians entertained the belief that sages inspired by God wrote the first sacred books in Tamil literature.

Turning to THEVARAM and THIRUVACHAKAM the greatest Saivite devotional masterpieces of later times, Saint Thirugnanasambandar[2] addresses Lord Siva as revealing the path of Light to four ancient sages who adored Him under a banyan tree. The same tradition has

received repeated mention by Saint Appar,[3] Saint Manickavachakar,[4] Saint Nakkirar,[5] and also one Vaishnavite Alwar,[6] Saint Sundaramurthi, in attributing the authorship of the original revelations to the four sages has expressed in clear terms[7] that under the banyan tree God revealed the Truth to them and they embodied the same in their model books.

Now it remains for us to see what was the purport of those original revelations which the inspired sages gave forth to the Tamil public in antediluvian times. Mystic works in Tamil were styled மறை in the days of Saint Tolkoppiar who refers to the term as the appellation of one of the seven kinds of composition in ancient Tamil. The மறை of his day embodied the secret sacred sayings and spells of such inspired saints and sages whose words had a miraculous potency. Commenting on the verse referring to the same, Nachinarkiniar[8] the the great Tamil critic of medieval times assures us that the expression மறைமொழி specifies occult spells in Tamil whose meaning must be learnt from specialists therein. The term மறை literally means

'that which is hidden or concealed' and it was applied to rare truths as well as occult ideas. In another verse of the Tolkoppiam the student is referred to 'Anthanar Marai' (அந்தணர் மறை) for knowledge of the evolution of speech sounds within the human frame. 'Anthanar' was then a word of specific import denoting a class of recluses who were distinguished for their loving service to humanity. It appears that knowledge about abstruse things was to be found in the books of such learned ascetics. Saint Thiruvalluvar's monumental work was styled 'பொதுமறை'; because it was a book of rare truths unfolded to the general public at large. In later times the word மறை came to be applied to the Vedas in Sanskrit as well and the two terms மறை and வேதம் became synonymous with each other. This was at the root of the confusion, (between the Tamil Maris and the Sanskrit Vedas) which has been so dangerously inimical to clarity of vision in medieval and modern times. It must be borne in mind that மறை is a pure Tamil word with an acceptation quite different from the root meaning of the term 'Veda' which means 'knowledge'.

The expression 'நான் மறை' (that is the four Marais) was applied to the set of four sacred originals,[9] which were, as mentioned above, composed by four great sages under the direct inspiration of the Almighty, in the shade of the banyan tree each contributing one book to the quartette and it appears that they revealed the rare hidden truths regarding அறம், பொருள், இன்பம், வீடு[10] the fourfold end[11] of all literature according to ancient Tamilians. Sometimes for brevity's sake the originals were simply named மறை or அருமறை and their purport as Aram (that is the right thing.)

These facts find abundant mention in numerous verses in THEVARAM and THIRUVACHAKAM. Here it is worth nothing that the conception of the fourfold end of all literature as அறம், பொருள், இன்பம், வீடு is entirely Tamilian. It runs through the whole range of Tamil literature from the Tolkappiam of old to the Manonmaniyam of yesterday. While the Sanskritists perhaps borrowed this concept from the Tamilians of antiquity, they styled the four objects not as ends of literature but as PURUSHARTAM (that is things worth attainment by men.)

Again, the grand theme of of Thiruvalluvar has been அறம், பொருள், இன்பம் and வீடு as attested by poet Mamulanar, who extols him as the divine exponent of these four ends. It was Thiruvalluvar who provided the Tamilians with a fit substitute for the lost originals which perished along with pre-Tolkoppiam literature, so that his inimitable work became the Tamil Vedam of post-Tolkappiam days in place of the நான்மறை of old.

This is affirmed by a pertinent reference to the 'நான்மறை' in an old stanza written by way of introduction to the THOLKAPPIAM by Panambaranar, a contemporary of its author. The TOLKAPPIAM is stated to have been submitted for approval to Athankotasan, a great Tamil scholar well versed in the நான்மறை of primeval time. Were the நான்மறை taken to indicate the four Sanskrit Vedas, it would be meaningless to say that a grand work on Tamil grammar was scrutinised by a deep student of Vedic literature in Sanskrit. The reason for subjecting the Tolkappiam to the critical supervision of the நான்மறை Tamil scholar is the unity of theme which connected the

one with the other, the most essential part of TOLKAPPIAM being Poruladikarm which purports to devise rules for the treatment of அறம், பொருள், இன்பம் and வீடு in Tamil literature. It is why the great commentator Nacchinarkiniar says that the நான்மறை of the stanza does not refer to the existing four Vedas in Sanskrit. It is regrettable that the commentator did not pursue the inquiry further. The Tamil NANMARAIS can in no way be identified with the Sanskrit Vedas which altogether treating of a different subject matter were originally three in number, developed in earlier times from the one Rigveda and became four at a later day by the addition of the Atharvaveda. In Purananuru and other ancient Tamil classics there is no reference to the three Vedas of Sanskrit and wherever there is mention of the number of Marais, it is always four. The confusion between the four original Tamil Marais treating of அறம், பொருள். இன்பம் and வீடு and the four Vedas in Sanskrit dealing with a pantheon of deities resulted from — (1) the disappearance of the former, perhaps even before the age of the last Sangam, (2) the numerical identity of both of these, (3) the

use of the word 'Vedam' in Tamil as a synonym for Marai. The confusion became worse confounded when an unhistorical interpretation of certain verses in THEVRAM and THIRUVACHAGAM gave currency to a legendary tradition that God Siva interpreted the import of the four Sanskrit Vedas to four sages under the banyan tree in the light of the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy. One of the verses may be instanced here. :

"நன்றாக; நால்வர்க்கு நான்மறையினுட்பொருளை
அன்றாலின் கீழிருந்தங்கற முரைத்தான்காணேடி."

In this verse நான்மறையின் உட்பொருளை means the substance of the four Marais. The verse signifies that God first acquainted the sages with the subject matter of the books which they subsequently reproduced in verse. In other words, it tells us that the substance was in existence before the composition, but unfortunately ignorance of history led people to imagine that the four Marais were the four Vedas in Sanskrit whose right meaning was elucidated by God Siva to the four Rishis, who did penance for the purpose.

The worst of it is that it is the starting point of the theory which traces the

Tamilian Saivite religion to Sanskrit Vedic origins. This unscientific idea has struck root so deeply in the mind of the ordinary public that the eradication of it seems to be possible only with the popularization of historical criticism in Tamil.

The foregoing discussion is only a brief statement of the historical truth that ancient Tamilians had revealed scriptures of their own called மறை four of which produced by four distinguished sages directly inspired by God in the very beginning of their spiritual progress were regarded as the oldest and most sacred of all. That the revelation was under the banyan tree is very significant in the light of the ancient Tamilian custom of worshipping their gods in the shade of trees, which were the nuclei of latter day temples. The number 'four' also is remarkable as suggestive of a similarity to the four Christian gospels by the four apostles of Lord Jésus.

One great question which is often raised in refutation of this view is, or 'Are there now no fragments of the original நான் மறை? The simple answer to this is 'no'; and the simplicity of it will not detract

from its truthfulness, if one bears in mind the wholesale disappearance of languages and literatures in the vicissitudes of fortune which attend human society in its infancy, even if writing were as extensive as in mordern times. It appears that the original நான்மறை were transmitted orally through fit disciples from generation to generation. This must be the reason why the commentator addresses his readers to go and gather what falls from saintly men well versed in them. While the Aryans have had the wonderful skill in preserving their holy hymns in set forms, the Tamilians have been very much behind them in this respect as attested by the complete loss of all the literary masterpieces of the pre-Tolkappiam Age and also of a great portion of those of the post-Tolkappiam period. The Tolkappiam is a mighty monumental work on Tamil grammar and it is a pity that not asingle record of literature which it refers to is available at the present day. Future research alone into the vast heaps of unhanded cudjan which lie a prey to moths and white ants should bring to light any antediluvian writing which may reveal to us

the real natureand characterof the literary development of the pre-Tholkappiam Age. A fragment called 'செங்கோன்றரைச்செலவு' has come to light with a peculiar metre of its own and it purports to describe the expedition of a Tamilian prince 'senkon.' No doubt its metre bespeaks its immense antiquity, but some of the orthodox scholars view it as a latter day production. However, enough of the work has not been published to admit of much profitable investigation.

This sad phenomenon of the decay and disappearance of literature has been a marked feature of the literary history of the Tamil people and has received a great impetus from the aggressive influence of Sanskritists from time to time. The very existence to-day of such a good portion of the Thevaram in the language has been the fortunate result of a happy accident which occurred about 900 years ago. The Thevaram hymnists flourished in the Tamil land in the 7th and 8th century A. D. and produced songs whose number was miraculously large, since it is said to be not less than a hundred thousand decads. Be it as it may, in the 11th

century a complete collection of those hymns was hardly available even to the rulying Chola prince of that day, thanks to whose perseverance and industry we are to-day in possession of the extant Thevaram literature. The story about it is this:

One Abaya Kulasekhara Cholan enraptured by the recitation of a few Thevaram hymns by the bards who came to his court sought to obtain a full collection of them. He had to go to a gifted Adisaivite Saint at Thirunariyur and learn from him that the Thevaram records were kept concealed in a big room, in the temple at Chidambaram, the doors of which bore the seal of the three great authors, Saint Sambhandar, Saint Appar, and Saint Sundaramoorthy. Accordingly he repaired with his retinue to Chidambaram, detected the room in question and asked the temple priests to unlock it. They gave a negative reply on the ground that unless the three great authors came back from heaven, the doors of the room which bore their hand and seal should not be opened. Then the prince resorted to the device of taking the images of the holy saints installed in the

temple in a grand procession to the gate of the apartment and bade the priests then open its doors. They could not refuse to comply with his request, bui as soon as the doors were flung open, most of the cudjan leaves were found crumbling to pieces, to the sad disappointment of the prince. Nevertheless he persistently ransacked the whole collection and gathered all that was left untouched by white ants and had them copied on copper plates to be circulated widely and transmitted to posterity; and what we now possess of ancient Thevaram is the intellectual and spiritual inheritance which Prince Abaya Kulasekhara's indefatigable zeal and labour safeguarded and perpetuated.

This one account will suffice for the present to show to us how the நான்மறை of the Tamilians of antiquity should have become a thing of the past, so that only the substance of it has been partly preserved to us in the cosmopolitan book of St. Thiruvalluvar, the 'seer of spotless soul' and the 'bard of universal man.'

1. வினையினீங்கி விளங்கியவறிவின்
முனைவன்கண்டது முதனூலாகும்.

2. ஓரால் நீழல் ஒண்கழலிரண்டு
முப்பொழுதேத்திய நால்வர்க்
கொளிநெறி காட்டினை.

3. ஆலின்கீழ் நால்வர்க் கறத்தான் கண்டாய்

4. அருந்தவருக்காலின் கீழறமுதலா நான்கினையு
மிருந்தவருக்கருளுமது.

5. ஆலநீழலன் றிருந்தறநெறி
நால்வர்கேட்க நன்கினிதருளினை.

6. ஆலநிழற் கீழறநெறியை நால்வர்க்கு
மேலையுகத்துரைத்தான் மெய்ந்தவத்தோன்.

7. கோதின்மாதவர் குழுவுடன்கேட்பக் கோல
வானிழற் கீழறம்பகர
வேதஞ்செய்தவ ரெய்தியவின்பம்.

8. நிறைமொழிமாந்த ராணையிற்கிளந்த
மறைமொழிதானே மந்திரமென்ப.

9. (a) மறைநான்குங் கல்லானிழற்கீழ்ப்
பன்னிய வெங்கள் பிரான்.

(b) நாலாய மறைக்கிறைவனுயினனே [கள்.
விரித்தானை நால்வர்க்கு வெவ்வேறு வேதங்

(c) ஆலதன் கீழிருந்து நால்வர்க்கறம் [தானை.
பொருளின்பம் வீடாறங்கவேதந் தெரித்

10. (a) அழிந்தசிந்தை யந்தணாளர்க்கறம் பொரு
மொழிந்த வாயான். [ளின்பம் வீடு

(b) மூதாருலகில் முனிவருடனாயற நான்கருள்
செய்தார்.

11. அறம், பொருளின்பம் வீடடைதல் நூற்
[பயனே.

12. அறம்பொருளின்பம் வீடென்ற நான்கின்
திறந்தெரிந்து செப்பியதேவை.

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